

PUBLIC/HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION ACROSS ARIZONA

Transportation coordination presents the potential for a more responsive, efficient and reliable service through the cooperative use of transport resources in both the urban and rural areas of the state. During the period November 15-18, 2011 in Phoenix, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) sponsored and hosted a Coordination Institute that was also sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), the National Resource Center (NRC), and Joblinks Employment Transportation. These national organizations are committed to removing barriers and improve mobility for all people. This Institute is an example of their dedication to providing technical assistance that seeks to improve human service transportation.

Transportation coordination is a cooperative arrangement between transport providers and the people who need rides in order to maintain a viable quality of life. There is no appropriate number of participating agencies in a coordination program. It can be as basic as ridesharing where several agency clients ride in the same vehicle. It can be as complex as all transport systems in a region pooling their resources and brokering the needs for travel with a wide array of transport providers.

Transportation coordination can mean something unique to every community. While the need is quite common, the availability of transport providers can vary considerably. In some rural areas there are few human service agencies and even fewer transport providers. Basic isolation found in rural areas is quite different than attempting to match multiple services provided by multiple agencies found in an urban setting.

This Institute provided the resources that explored many subjects including some that are listed: mobility management; one-call/one-click center; strategies for expanded services; working with health care partners; identifying transport needs; engaging local officials and other community members; outreach efforts; cost allocation; transport efficiencies; improving service quality; elimination of duplicate trips; and flexible funding.

About ninety people participated in the multiple workshops. These people came from the nine planning regions that cover the entire state. Each planning region assembled teams that averaged about five people. Each team developed a vision, action plans for three and 12 month periods, and they also focused on some longer term three to five year achievements. Each team was requested to develop five activities that are part of the coordination process; (1) a Regional Public/Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan, (2) a Local Coordination Council, (3) designate a Regional Mobility Manager, (4) formulate plans for a One-call/ One-click Center, and (5) select a series of Performance Measures that would aid in defining success.

(1) The Regional Public/Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan

The ADOT provided the teams with a template that exemplified the plan elements. Each completed plan is to include:

- An evaluation of the community's resources;
- An assessment of transportation needs;
- Strategies and/or activities to address gaps in service as well as efficiencies in service delivery that are expected through coordination; and
- Relative priorities of the strategies.

The prioritization and description of the preferred alternatives is essential. Local providers must refer to this plan when they apply for funding through ADOT Public Transportation Grant Process.

(2) The Local Regional Coordinating Council

This group would oversee and implement the provision of coordination activities in the region. This council consists of stakeholders interested in improving mobility. They represent diverse groups that reflect community values with a capability to build local support for their actions.

(3) A Regional Mobility Manager

This is a person that serves as the policy coordinator, operations service broker, and customer travel navigator. Using a family of transport services, this person disaggregates service planning and markets in order to better serve customers with their travel needs in and outside the region. This person also works with local mobility managers and also arranges for long distance trips that may be inter-regional or inter-state.

(4) A One-call/ One-click Center

This center represents that one stop access for people to get a ride. It simplifies access through technology that puts the customer first keeping standards for eligibility, various funding programs and assorted providers in the background. It is marketed throughout the region as the one call that does it all.

(5) Performance Measures

These represent the levels of achievement or the description of the results each team wants to strive for. The more specific the desired results, the better they will know how well their team is progressing. They remind the team to stop, look around, decide if they are succeeding, and continue on that course or correct if needed. Good performance measures build trust in the community of planners, managers, providers and those who want to travel. Metrics are important in management. You cannot manage what you do not measure.

After the Institute, technical assistance was provided to each of the teams. This was done to encourage and enable them to reach their goals. This Coordination Institute built the foundation for the sharing of rides, funding, training, purchasing, more reliable service, improved access, increased community participation, enhanced quality and better use of equipment.

The challenge is to keep up the enthusiasm at a high level as the teams progress in completing their action plans. The technical assistance providers are capable and willing to provide the services required for the teams to achieve success. ADOT is committed to supporting the teams as each in their own unique way strive for maximum coordinated mobility for their regions.

Visit www.azdot.gov for more information.